

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MEXICO 06588 031818Z

53

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 SP-03 L-03 CPR-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00

TRSE-00 DRC-01 /111 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3092

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 6588

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MX

SUBJ: ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS: CONVERSATION WITH RABASA

REF: MEXICO 6457

1. AT RABASA'S INVITATION I WENT TO HIS HOME YESTERDAY EVENING TO DISCUSS PRESIDENTIAL TRIP (WHICH WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY) AND ALSO BRACERO NOTE.

2. REGARDING OUR NOTE, RABASA SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT WE COULD NOT BE MORE FORTHCOMING BUT WAS NOT SURPRISED, AS HE TOO RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS A COMPLICATED MATTER. HE DISSENTED ON ONLY ONE POINT MADE IN OUR NOTE, I.E., THE STATEMENT THAT INCREASED MECHANICAL AND CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY IS REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR HAND LABOR IN AGRICULTURE. THIS SEEMS DISPROVED BY THE FACT THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF MEXICANS READILY FIND EMPLOYMENT IN U.S. AGRICULTURE. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT THEY, AS ILLEGALS, WERE PRESUMABLY WILLING TO ACCEPT LOWER THAN MINIMUM WAGE RATES AND THUS, IN EFFECT, WERE AN UNFAIR COMPETITION TO THE AMERICAN WORKERS, BOTH CITIZENS AND LEGAL ALIENS. RABASA ADMITTED THIS MIGHT BE TRUE BUT MAINTAINED THAT IF AND WHEN A BRACERO AGREEMENT WERE NEGOTIATED, MEXICO WOULD

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MEXICO 06588 031818Z

HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION TO TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE ILLEGAL

ENTRANCE INTO THE U.S. ON BEING PRESSED, HE ADMITTED THAT THIS WOULD BE AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK, WHICH WOULD INVOLVE SEALING THE BORDER HERMETICALLY, BUT MAINTAINED THAT MEXICO WOULD HAVE TO SHOW ITS GOOD FAITH BY TAKING VARIOUS MEASURES TO HELP REDUCE THE FLOW EVEN IF IT COULD NOT STANCH IT ENTIRELY. IN SUM, HE ACCEPTED THE U.S. POSITION AS STATED IN THE NOTE AND APPRECIATED ITS ELEVATED TONE, BUT CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HE HAD AN OBLIGATION TO RETURN TO THE FRAY. SPEAKING CONFIDENTIALLY, HE SAID THAT THIS WAS PERSONALLY EMBARRASSING FOR HIM AS A MEXICAN TO HAVE TO PLEAD THAT WE ACCEPT MEXICAN LABORERS WHO WERE EAGER TO LEAVE THEIR OWN COUNTRY. HE RECOGNIZED THAT ONLY ON A LONG-TERM BASIS THROUGH THE RAISING OF THE MEXICAN STANDARD OF LIVING WOULD THIS PROBLEM BE AMELIORATED.

3. REGARDING A PRESS RELEASE OR OTHER PUBLICITY FOR OUR NOTE, HE SAID WE WERE QUITE IN OUR RIGHTS TO GIVE ANY FORM OF PUBLICITY THAT WE DESIRED, AS MEXICO ITSELF HAD SET THE PRECEDENT IN REGARD TO ITS OWN NOTE. HE HAD DONE THIS, HOWEVER, FOR A VERY SPECIAL REASON, WHICH HE HAD EXPLAINED TO US AT THE TIME, AND IN FACT THOUGHT THAT THE OPERATION HAD, ON THE WHOLE, BEEN BENEFICIAL TO U.S. INTERESTS AS MUCH AS TO MEXICAN. THE FACT THAT MEXICAN TELEVISION AND PRESS REPORTERS HAD VISITED THE CENTERS AND HAD REPORTED THAT THE CONDITIONS THERE WERE NOT BAD, AND THAT THIS HAD SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN CONFIRMED BY FOREIGN SECRETARIAT OFFICIAL BARONA LOBATO, WAS A DEFINITE PLUS FOR THE U.S., WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DISARMING OPPOSITION CRITICISM BY HAVING SHOWN THE FOREIGN SECRETARIAT TO BE AGGRESSIVE IN DEFENSE OF MEXICAN INTERESTS. RABASA OBSERVED THAT OUR PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE HAD SEEMED TO HIM SOMEWHAT LESS AGREEABLE THAN THE ACTUAL NOTE. I TOLD HIM THAT WE NOW HAD A REVISED VERSION WHICH COVERED ALL THE POINTS MADE IN THE NOTE AND LEFT HIM A COPY. IN A FRIENDLY CONVERSATION AS TO WHAT WERE THE MOST MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS COURSE TO FOLLOW, I TOLD HIM THAT I WAS CONSIDERING THAT A FIRST STEP MIGHT BE ANSWERING A FEW PRESS QUESTIONS AFTER IT BECAME KNOWN THAT OUR NOTE WAS DELIVERED AND SAVING A WRITTEN PRESS RELEASE FOR A POSSIBLE SECONDARY STAGE. RABASA THOUGHT THIS MOST APPROPRIATE AND FRIENDLY PROCEDURE AND SUGGESTED THAT HE READ OUR REVISED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MEXICO 06588 031818Z

VERSION OF THE PRESS RELEASE AND WE COULD TALK FURTHER ON MONDAY.

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Message Attributes

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